



9th November 2017

Dear Parent/Carer,

Changes to SQA National Qualifications

Last September, the Scottish Government announced changes were to be made to National Qualifications over a period of three years, starting from session 2017-18 with National 5 qualifications. Changes to Higher qualifications will be made from session 2018-19 and to Advanced Higher qualifications from session 2019-20. To date, the SQA has issued detailed information only about how National 5 will be affected.

National 5: What is changing?

The fundamental change being made to most qualifications is the removal of all mandatory unit assessments from course awards. This means candidates will not be entered for units except, for example, where a course has a contributing unit such as the internally assessed speaking component of National 5 English. In all other cases, pupils will only be entered for the course unless there are exceptional circumstances such as long-term ill-health, where candidates may be entered for units *only* rather than a course award.

The decision to remove mandatory unit assessments has been made to allow more time for learning and teaching and to reduce the amount of assessment experienced by young people taking national qualifications. As a result of the removal of the unit assessments, however, course assessments have been strengthened. This means for each National 5 course, one or more of the following changes has been made: extension of the existing examination paper; extension or modification of the existing item of coursework; addition of a new examination paper; addition of a new item of coursework.

This means that there will now be an examination in some subjects, which up to now had none. Administration and IT, Hospitality, Practical Metalworking and Practical Woodworking will all have an examination at the end of the course. In other subjects, the change will be seen in the coursework assignment that has to be completed or pupils will have to sit a longer examination at the end of the course.

A further change announced by the SQA is to extend the grade boundary for a Grade D by 5%. For example, a Grade D will be awarded to a candidate who achieves a notional 40%-49%. Previously, Grade D was given only to those with a notional 45% - 49%.

How will this affect your child?

The Senior Phase, S4-S6, is designed to ensure that there are a range of pathways open to pupils to help them gain qualifications, at different levels, at a rate that best suits them. There are different routes to each of the qualifications, which allow pupils to pick up awards at different levels along the way.

With the changes to qualifications, it is important that pupils are entered at the correct level to ensure they gain an award at the end of S4. Schools have to make decisions about course entries by the end of November: these decisions will be based on a range of assessment information, gathered over time. A one-off assessment may be used by some subjects to confirm previous assessment evidence and professional judgement prior to verifying levels. The aim will be to ensure that all pupils are entered at a level where they will be challenged, but can still achieve.

There will be a further opportunity for transfer of pupils between levels following the Estimate Exams in January, where appropriate. Pupils predicted to achieve less than 35% across the totality of the course assessment, post-Estimate Exams, may be transferred to a lower level of qualification.

In the first instance, it is expected pupils who have achieved second curriculum level in the Broad General Education (BGE) by the end of S3 to progress to National 2 or National 3 Level in the Senior Phase (from S4). For those who have achieved third curriculum level in the BGE, progression would be expected to be to National 4. For those pupils who have achieved fourth level in the BGE, the expectation is they would progress to study courses at National 5 level.

Family Learning Evening – National Qualifications Changes - Wed 29th November, 6.00 pm – 7.30 pm

The school realises that there is a lot of information contained in this letter. We also recognise you may have questions that you want to ask on this topic. Therefore, we have organised an S3-S6 Family Learning Evening on Wednesday 29th November in Ellon Academy from 6.00 pm – 7.30 pm. Robert Fraser, SQA Liaison Manager for Aberdeenshire, will deliver a presentation on the National Qualifications changes and will answer any questions you may have. There will also be faculty stalls on display and faculty staff in attendance. The library will run an interactive stall to demonstrate a range of study support resources. A representative from Scholar will also be present to showcase what Scholar has to offer and to distribute parent passwords.

Please complete the tear-off slip below and return to the school office no later than Monday 20th November, should you wish to attend the Family Learning Event. There is space to write down any questions you would like answered: these will be passed to Robert Fraser, SQA, to allow his session to be as tailored as possible.

In the meantime, if you would like more information on the changes to National 5 qualifications, please refer to the SQA website: www.sqa.org.uk/nqchanges or the Scottish Government's Parent Factsheet – Changes to the National Qualifications and what this means for your child: <https://www.npfs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/National-Qualifications-NPFS-QA-.pdf>

Yours faithfully,


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Pauline Buchan
Rector
Ellon Academy

S3-S6 Family Learning Evening – NQ Changes – Wednesday 29th November 2017, 6.00 – 7.30 pm

Name of child _____

Class _____

Number of people attending the Family Learning Evening: _____

Questions for Robert Fraser, SQA Liaison Manager:

Please continue overleaf, if required

Please return to the school office no later than **Monday 20th November 2017**. Thank you.